



## State Representative Jack Cera

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### **Rep. Cera brings local advocates to Statehouse, shines spotlight on eastern Ohio economic issues**

#### *Bipartisan legislation would assist areas impacted by shale drilling*

COLUMBUS— State Rep. Jack Cera (D-Bellaire) Tuesday welcomed community and business leaders from Eastern Ohio to the Statehouse, where they attended a meeting of the House Ways and Means Committee. The local leaders testified before committee members in support of House Bill (HB) 105, Cera’s bipartisan legislation to ensure communities in the shale area of the state benefit from the recent increase in oil and gas drilling.

“I believe it is only fair that the state invests in the eastern Ohio communities most impacted by oil and natural gas activity,” said Cera. “I am grateful to have such strong local support for House Bill 105, which will help our communities repair roadways and bridges while also creating a positive environment for the industry to grow and create new jobs.”

While the state appropriates roughly \$19 million for regulating the oil and gas industry, the existing severance tax currently generates over twice that amount. HB 105, sponsored by Cera and Rep. Brian Hill (R-Zanesville), will direct severance tax revenue in excess of \$18 million to various programs and services in the shale region, including funds for road repair and other infrastructure needs; increased local government funds; a grant program for firefighter and EMT equipment; and a grant program for local governments and school districts to help convert their vehicles to compressed natural gas (CNG).

The bill also requires the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to develop a well-plugging program for known and suspected idle and orphaned wells.

“We need the revenues from the severance tax to return to our area,” said Rick Frio, Chairman of MPR Transloading and Energy Services, LLC in Bellaire, Ohio. “[If HB 105 is passed,] the entire state then benefits with job creation and additional tax revenues for many generations.”

Other local advocates testifying highlighted the impact of the growing oil and gas industry on area roads.

“Some of the roads [in Belmont County] have embankment failures,” testified Franklin Schaffer, President of the Belmont County Township Association. According to Schaffer, these road damages make it difficult to deliver mail, transport children to school and drive emergency vehicles.

House Bill 105 will continue to be considered in the House Ways and Means Committee.